

Minutes, Public Works Committee

Meeting of April 15, 2008

Present: Rob Crowner, Chair; Steve Braun, Don George, Charlie Moran, Guilford Mooring, Vince O'Connor (@8:00), Mike Cann (@ 8:10). Also Meghan Dineen, Mark Noonan, and Mehul Patel, UMass engineering students

Noted: Still missing minutes from: May 07, February 08.

March minutes accepted with minor changes. Unanimous 4-0 (Cann, O'Connor not yet present)

Rob Crowner noted that PWC makes an annual report to Town Meeting. He will draft and circulate.

Next meeting: May 6, regular place.

Charlie Moran brought an illustrative projection of Town road projects assuming \$450,000 available annually for road paving, a spreadsheet that had been distributed before the meeting. The Committee went over the sheet. Charlie thought that the sheet might be useful to make the case for additional road-funding. Guilford Mooring would prefer that we use this sheet for illustrative purposes: that we don't put together a package of streets for X dollars in bonding, but that we speak generically--e.g. "we can fix all major Town roads designated 'arterial' and 'collector' with an Overall Condition Index of 20 or less, for X dollars."

Guilford will help Charlie make the projection more accurate, though all agreed that it was not a planning document but a document designed to make a point about the relationship between roadwork needed and presently-available funds.

Guilford reported that the Town Manager is open to a bond issue to fund needed road work. Charlie reported that the Assistant Town Manager spoke with him about a bond issue as well, one to be paid for from the Town's capital budget. Guilford noted that such a bond issue would come before the JCPC and compete with other capital needs.

Charlie Moran reported that he had, after obtaining permission from Rob, contacted the Assistant Town Manager, John Musante, and asked about whether the Town could spend funds from the 'year ahead' that has been mentioned by Guilford Mooring. Mr. Musante was clear in his opposition to any such forward spending. He said that the Town would have to borrow, and that long-term borrowing against Chapter 90 revenues is not permitted. Charlie brought a graphic that demonstrated that spending ahead would require either annual short-term borrowing or long-term borrowing. Guilford Mooring was also clear in his opposition to any such spending ahead. He noted that towns and municipalities must have Ch. 90 funds in hand before they can submit proposals for new projects to the State; he noted as well that area towns that had spent ahead were not able to do roadwork this spring.

Steve Braun hoped that we could begin and continue a program of crack sealing the roads that were in good enough shape to warrant this treatment. Guilford Mooring noted that he has reserved \$30K this fall for crack sealing. The work requires a crew of 3-4, and a police detail.

Vince O'Connor voiced opposition to bonding unless there is a new revenue stream discovered. He suggested that for this revenue stream the Town pursue the collection of excise taxes on student automobiles garaged in Amherst for most of the year.

Guilford Mooring was asked whether increased roadwork would require increased DPW staff. He responded that the DPW could do 2-3M of additional roadwork with its existing staff.

Steve Braun:

Moved: To form a subcommittee to work with Guilford Mooring to develop a proposal for funding road repairs via a bond issue; and that the subcommittee be composed of Steve Braun, Vince O'Connor, and Don George.

Voted 6-0.

Vince O'Connor:

Moved: That PWC Recommend to Select Board that they work with Mass Highway to insure that the East Leverett Road bridge is in use within a year.

Voted 6-0

Don George volunteered to take a look at the East Leverett Road bridge plans and report back to the Committee.

There was further discussion about a number of topics: the paving of Pelham Road beyond Poet's Corner to Ward Street; the DPW FY 08 budget in the light of other department budgets; DPW's need to restore the positions lost in FY 2003; and the possibility that PWC would go to this Town Meeting with a request to fund these positions from the FY 09 budget. It being late, further discussion of these issues was deferred to the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Moran, Sec'y *pro tem*